

# ARCTIC ROMANCE.

## Nordenskjold's Story of the Swedish Expedition.

### An Interesting Account of Perils, Adventure and Triumph in the Arctic Seas.

### The Long-Sought Passage is Traversed by the Great Explorer.

### A Recital of His Perilous Voyage in the Frozen Regions—Some Account of the People of the Arctic Zone.

[Translated especially for the *Review* from Nordenskjold's Journal.]

The first written communications from Professor Nordenskjold, after the successful accomplishment of his object, have been eagerly awaited, not only throughout Scandinavia, but in all countries where the gallant explorer's expedition has been watched with so much interest. The first detailed account has at length reached Sweden by the last mail from Japan in the form of a very long letter from Professor to Doctor Erik Dickson, the chief physician of the expedition. It contains highly interesting particulars relating to the climate, botany and inhabitants of Eastern Siberia. It will be remembered that the explorer, steamer Vega, after proceeding from Gothenburg all round the north coast of Siberia, got frozen up on the 28th of September last year, when with a very short interval of Behring's straits, and did not get released until the 18th of July. She then, as previously announced by telegraph, proceeded for Japan, and after visiting several places in Behring's straits and the neighbor hood, finally reached Yokohama on the 23d of September. Professor Nordenskjold is the following account of the events of the winter:

**WINTER QUARTERS.**  
Our winter quarters were situated in latitude 67° 7' north, longitude 173° 30' west of Greenwich, on the Asiatic side of the most northerly portion of Behring's straits. On our arrival the ground here was frozen and covered with hoar-frost, but free of snow, so that our boats could form a line, not only in the unknown waters of this region. Near the shore we found a thick carpet of ice, interspersed with brilliant pebbles, which was succeeded further inland by a barren, gravelly plain, only covered by a black lichen—*gryphora prosobesia*—and a few flowers, which among arctic regions are the most common. To the southward was found a tract composed by lagoons and small lakes, the shores of which were covered with a carpet of luxuriant vegetation, composed of grasses and sedges. On the higher land around the decomposing granite and dolerite affords a richer soil, and the vegetation assumes a more varied character, among which were seen extensive patches of *Choke-berry* (*Empetrum Nigrum*), of *Andromeda tetragyna*, and large clumps of a sort of artemisia. Dr. Kjellman also together a varied collection of plants, some of them well known to various countries in the far north.

On the sandy spit which separates the lagoons from the sea there were two *Tschukitch* villages. Of these, the one nearest to the Vega's winter quarters is called *Pitejka*. It consisted at first of seven tents, but the inhabitants, among whom were a few natives as well as a great excitement. Men, women, children and dogs were seen running about in eager confusion on the beach. There was evidently a fear of losing such an excellent chance of purchasing spirits and tobacco. Many vain attempts were made to get a boat, but all failed, and it was not until the 12th of February that we were able to lead a large skin boat to a channel in the ice leading toward the ship. This boat was then rowed up to the vessel, loaded to the gunwale with men and women, without any regard to the danger of rowing a heavily laden skin-boat between sharp, newly-formed ice floes.

The meeting was very cordial on both sides, and formed the commencement of very good relations between the natives and ourselves, which continued throughout the whole of our sojourn. The report of the distinguished foreigners' arrival must have spread very quickly. We soon received visits even from distant villages, and at length the Vega got to be a resting place where every passer by stopped with his team of dogs for several hours, to satisfy his curiosity and to give good words, or something more substantial, for the sake of getting a little warm food or a bit of tobacco, or sometimes, when the weather was very bad, a "tea" (the *Tschukitch* name for a dram). All were free to come and go without hindrance over our deck, which was incumbered with all sorts of things, yet we did not have to complain of the loss of even the most trifling article. Honestly seen, nature to them. They generally sat on the ground, and the mode of life of the Europeans got the best of a bargain, and they soon became troublesome through their unrestrained habits of begging. They also would often sell the same thing twice over, and were always prodigal of promises which they had no intention of fulfilling. Their descriptions were as often, not as a crime, but as a duty, and they often gave fraudulent descriptions of what they offered for sale. Their heads were passed off as furred, with their dead foxes cut off as hare, and it was laughable to observe the natives' consternation when we discovered the deception.

**NO LOVE FOR MONEY.**  
The *Tschukitch* had no notion of money, and the small supply we had of articles of barter suited to their taste, obliged us also to enhance the value of our wares to a high price. To the great surprise of the natives, the usual articles of barter in Arctic countries, viz. skins and blubber, were not dealt with on board the Vega. On the other hand, I collected by gifts such a considerable quantity of food was given out in the course of the winter that we materially contributed to avert the famine which threatened to spread among the population in midwinter. None of the natives in the neighborhood of the Vega was a Christian. English, or any other European language, although one or two could speak a few words of English, or a salutation in Russian. This was a vexatious circumstance which caused us much inconvenience. Lieutenant Nordenskjold began to study their language with so much zeal and success, that in the course of a few weeks he had himself understood pretty well. As a fruit of his studies, I hope the Lieutenant Nordenskjold will be able on his return to publish a comprehensive vocabulary of this little known language, together with a sketch of its grammatical construction.

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On the 6th of October we had a visit from the chief of the *Tschukitch* *Vasylj* Menka. He was a fine, well-built, middle-aged man, dressed in a blue flannel shirt and trousers, under which a blue flannel coat could be seen. To give importance to his arrival, he came over the ice to the vessel on a sled, drawn, not by dogs, but by some of his subordinates. On his arrival he immediately showed us a document, which consisted of a few red and white fox skins.

He could neither read nor write, and his Russian was very defective and hard to understand. He, however, soon understood a map that was shown to him, and with great accuracy he pointed out the location of the principal places in Northern Siberia. This chief officer of the district had no notion of the existence of any Emperor of Russia, but he knew that a very powerful person resided in Iktuk. Menka said that in a Russian station he was going to Markova, a Russian station on the coast of the Arctic Ocean. He had been there for some time, and he had seen a man in an open letter addressed to the Governor-General at Iktuk, requesting him to communicate its contents to His Majesty King Oscar. It might be seen at once, however, that Menka must have received the letter as a sort of confirmatory diploma for himself. When he got ashore he was accompanied by a circle of natives around him, and, sitting down in a dignified manner in the midst, unfolded the paper, but upside down, and proceeded to read from it long sentences in *Tschukitch* to an audience, who seemed astounded and surprised. Next day we had another visit from the great and red-eyed potentate, when presents were exchanged, and finally he danced, first as "a seal" and afterwards, together with some of his hosts, to the great delight of all the beholders, both native and European.

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some boiled ribs of seal were served up, and last came a sort of soup, probably seal-blood. Of these dishes the latter was the most palatable. The soup was pressed to parake of each course, but when I did not accept the invitation, it seemed to me that the soup was very good. The soup was pressed to parake of each course, but when I did not accept the invitation, it seemed to me that the soup was very good. The soup was pressed to parake of each course, but when I did not accept the invitation, it seemed to me that the soup was very good.

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The thickness of the ice was measured by the following means: A small square of ice, December 1st, 16 centimeters; January 1st, 92 centimeters; February 1st, 108 centimeters; March 1st, 123 centimeters; April 1st, 127 centimeters. During the long-continued severe cold in January, the temperature several times went down below the freezing point of mercury. The natives now made a rich catch and gorged again immoderately, with their usual excesses as to the future. For example, 45 "snads" (plover bladders) were to be seen in one tent. The children, who had fallen away during the previous weeks, soon began to recover their good condition. The vessel's deck was a continual scene of merriment, and the natives were cheerful and merry, in a temperature of 40 degrees below zero, Fahrenheit. They brought to barter specimens of their works of art, such as they thought would be interesting to foreigners. I have in this way obtained a large quantity of drawings and bone carvings, which are instructive showing the standard of taste among a people which still belongs to the bronze age. I shall soon give an account to our Geographical Society, illustrated by drawings, of the collection thus got together, and of the customs of this remarkable polar race. According to numerous replies made by natives to questions put to them, it is generally open water here all through the summer.

**VISIT FROM A CHIEFTAIN.**  
On the 6th of October we had a visit from the chief of the *Tschukitch* *Vasylj* Menka. He was a fine, well-built, middle-aged man, dressed in a blue flannel shirt and trousers, under which a blue flannel coat could be seen. To give importance to his arrival, he came over the ice to the vessel on a sled, drawn, not by dogs, but by some of his subordinates. On his arrival he immediately showed us a document, which consisted of a few red and white fox skins.

He could neither read nor write, and his Russian was very defective and hard to understand. He, however, soon understood a map that was shown to him, and with great accuracy he pointed out the location of the principal places in Northern Siberia. This chief officer of the district had no notion of the existence of any Emperor of Russia, but he knew that a very powerful person resided in Iktuk. Menka said that in a Russian station he was going to Markova, a Russian station on the coast of the Arctic Ocean. He had been there for some time, and he had seen a man in an open letter addressed to the Governor-General at Iktuk, requesting him to communicate its contents to His Majesty King Oscar. It might be seen at once, however, that Menka must have received the letter as a sort of confirmatory diploma for himself. When he got ashore he was accompanied by a circle of natives around him, and, sitting down in a dignified manner in the midst, unfolded the paper, but upside down, and proceeded to read from it long sentences in *Tschukitch* to an audience, who seemed astounded and surprised. Next day we had another visit from the great and red-eyed potentate, when presents were exchanged, and finally he danced, first as "a seal" and afterwards, together with some of his hosts, to the great delight of all the beholders, both native and European.

With great honor and respect, his master, who had done to meet the herd, and wished him good morning by pushing his nose against his master's forehead, and then he went to the tent, where he had a man-of-war's crew in divisions. The owner next went and greeted each of the deer, who put their noses against his forehead. He, on his part, took each deer by the horns and examined it most carefully. Then the inspection was over, and he went to the tent, where he had a man-of-war's crew in divisions. The owner next went and greeted each of the deer, who put their noses against his forehead. He, on his part, took each deer by the horns and examined it most carefully. Then the inspection was over, and he went to the tent, where he had a man-of-war's crew in divisions.

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**THE GREAT SLED.**  
On the 17th March, 1859, I went, accompanied by the sledges, to the tent of the *Tschukitch* *Vasylj* Menka. He was a fine, well-built, middle-aged man, dressed in a blue flannel shirt and trousers, under which a blue flannel coat could be seen. To give importance to his arrival, he came over the ice to the vessel on a sled, drawn, not by dogs, but by some of his subordinates. On his arrival he immediately showed us a document, which consisted of a few red and white fox skins.

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**THE WOMEN WERE TATTOOED.**  
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**AN EXCURSION.**  
To the village of *Pitejka*, in Kolutchek Creek, to see a native named *Tschepchoko*, who had talked of going to Anadyr, and to ask him when he would be able to start. Nordenskjold reports that the village consisted of four tents. The number of inhabitants is only something over twenty persons. "I was received," he says "outside the tents by the population of the village, and conducted to *Tschepchoko*'s tent. He was a fine, well-built, middle-aged man, dressed in a blue flannel shirt and trousers, under which a blue flannel coat could be seen. To give importance to his arrival, he came over the ice to the vessel on a sled, drawn, not by dogs, but by some of his subordinates. On his arrival he immediately showed us a document, which consisted of a few red and white fox skins.

**NO LOVE FOR MONEY.**  
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